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ABSTRACT

The "new" economics of education replaces the "old" economics expressed in human capital theory, which viewed education as contributing to individual enhancement and ultimately to economic betterment. The "old" economics foundered on the rising levels of youth unemployment, a result of declining productivity and economic growth and rising public debt. The "new" economics, emphasizing a more skillful, educated work force, shifts focus from the individual to the national community and advocates linkages between schooling and industry. Both "new" and "old" economics are rooted in the pre-Keynesian economics of the neoclassical school. Unlike laissez faire capitalism, the new economics policy sees government's role as providing a climate that allows the imperatives of business efficiency and economic success full expression. The present highly business-oriented view of a society's resources is not an Australian phenomenon, but must be viewed in its international context. Although the "new" economics may appear discordant to educators, the movement has greatly affected government's educational concerns and goals. Educational communities must respond critically and constructively so that the government's often poorly articulated concerns and the realities of social change receive constructive expression in educational practice. The education establishment's basic duty is to transcend the social obsessions of the moment and balance competing educational aims. (39 references) (MLH)

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THE 'NEW' ECONOMICS AND EDUCATION - CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

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THE 'NEW' ECONOMICS AND EDUCATION - CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

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Abstract: This paper argues that while the 'new' economics may appear discordant to the educationalist, the movement has greatly affected the educational concerns and goals of government. However, consequent official aims and policies are frequently spelt out in an incomplete and incohate manner and their practical educational implications must be therefore worked through comprehensively and critically by the educational communities. Further, the 'new' economics in education are not merely to do with relations between government and education, nor of the partial manner in which education, because of pressing economic problems, is being officially approached. The movement is also representative of new and profound economic, social, and vocational issues which must be addressed as society moves into a post-industrial age.

The 'New' and 'Old' Economics of Education.

The 'new' economics is seen by some educational writers as the importance now attached to education as part of economic revival. It replaces the 'old' economics, expressed in the so called "human capital theory" initiated by T.W.Schultz, which viewed education as contributing to individual enhancement and through this to economic betterment. The 'old' economics foundered on the rising levels of youth unemployment in the 1970's and early 1980's, itself one of the results of declining levels in productivity and economic growth and rising public debt. More precise studies of the relationship between educational and vocational attainment also weakened confidence in human capital theory (Berg, 1970). The 'new' economics with its emphasis upon a more skilful and educated workforce, particularly through vocational education and skills training, might therefore be seen as the 'old' economics of education revisited, but presented in broader perspective, from the individual to the national community, and with renewed faith in the economic potential of education (Institute of Manpower Studies, 1984). It does not restrict its vision to educational institutions but includes the effectiveness of skills training in the workplace and the efficacy of the links forged between schooling and industry (Warner 1987; Sweet 1989; Elliason and Ryan 1987). The relationships are explicit in recent Ministerial papers, such as A Changing Workforce (Dawkins 1988a), Strengthening Australia's Schools (Dawkins 1988b) and the Australian Manufacturing Council's Skills in Manufacturing Industry: Future Directions (1988). A report by the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET 1987) put this position quite succintly:

> The primary question then is no longer whether education and training are factors in economic performance, but rather what needs to be done to improve their provision, by what means and which directions and where responsibility for action lies. (p. 4)

Hence the 'new' economics is also a particular way of viewing education and, it must be said, at times a rationalisation for it. The reality is that no contemporary western society could dismantle its education system on the basis of debit analyses from educational economists. Education has too singular place in the community as a social provision for the young and for their acculturation. What a community may seek to do, at any particular time, is to make education more responsive to what it perceives as its social priorities. At present, the main social priority is education as an instrument of individual and community economic achievement. Other key priorities in the past, have been politically or religiously ideological, or more passively the quest for social order and productivity from a suitably prepared populace, or the preparation of an educated elite to rule.

Both the 'old' and the 'new' economics have their roots in the pre-Keynesian economics of the neo-classical school. The Keynesian position had been used as an official inflationary instrument to take the Western World, and America, in particular, out of the great depression. The so called 'new' economics, of our own time, is also seen as the panacea for poor economic growth but its ideological origins are more sympathetically placed with a quite different economic tradition, one that held sway in the latter decades of the last century.

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Indeed the historian might sometimes wonder what century he/she is living in, given the nature of some of the current economic debate. Present political/economic wisdom lauds business managerial skills, the deregulated marketplace, strict controls on government spending, individual and corporate competitiveness, low public debt and personal and product success. So did those, who led the so called economic revolution, in the USA, in the latter part of the 19th century. The doctrine of Social Darwinism was one of its more extreme ideological manifestations. Borrowing from evolutionary theory, the Social Darwinists emphasised survival of the economically fittest and conversely the social dangers of propping up the economically weak. It was obviously not a doctrine at all congruent with the ideals of the welfare state and it was antithetical to some of the older, more humanistic goals of education. While recognising the historic origins and rhetoric of the current 'new' economics, one is still somewhat shaken to find references to "the new species of Social Darwinism" in a scholarly study of contemporary educational trends (Neave 1988).

The 'new' economics stems from the social and economic challenges and even crises which followed the long era of high economic growth after World War II. The electorate in the western world had come to expect high living standards, a norm not easily served during a protracted period of economic downturn. Hence the term the"politics of abundance", has been coined to refer to the efforts of governments to manage the economy in such a way that acceptably high living standards are maintained. Basically this has meant endeavouring to make the major arms of the corporate state- government, business and the workforce as efficient and productive as possible. It has also involved much concern with the economic promise offered by the new technologies, and by scientific research, applied to the production problems and potentials of industry in particular. There is no question that the desertion by the peoples of eastern Europe of Communism, and its command economy, has greatly reinforced faith in the marketplace.

At the same time, the new emphases in economic policy is different from the 'old' economics in that unlike laissez faire capitalism, it sees government playing a vigorous role, in providing a climate in which the imperatives of business efficiency and economic success may have full expression. In this government-business enterprise, education is viewed as critically important for human resources have a key role to play.

The 'New' Economics of Education in Australia

The present highly business oriented view of a society's resources is then not a peculiar Australian phenomenon, translated into an educational context by Mr Dawkins, but an international one. This is made very clear, for example, in the literature of contemporary educational trends (See, for example, Shattock 1984; Williams 1985; Dennison 1988; Neave 1988; Walford 1988). What is distinctive about local official concerns are their relationship to the special realities of the Australian economy. These particularly turn upon the inbuilt economic vagaries of a commodity producing nation and a desire to make Australian industry more productive, diversified and innovative. This situation has been given a sharper edge by a realisation that the nation must be more economically self dependant than ever before, and that the countries who have become the competitively strongest are those who are leaders in technological research and application. There is also an awareness that the challenges will become greater, through the accelerated development of world trading blocs, after the EEC becomes an integrated common market by 1992. Further, some of our Asian neighbours, particularly those in Northeast Asia are, by contrast to Australia, experiencing the world's highest economic growth rates and the implications of this, for Australia, have been sharply highlighted in the Garnaut Report. The simple truth is that what have been called the 'world wide imperatives' now bind all peoples and countries more than ever before (Chesneaux 1988, p. 55). These include the cost of raw materials, comparative labour costs, productivity and competitiveness, bank interest rates and currency fluctuations.

There can be little doubt about the affect of these various realities upon the mind of Mr Dawkins: At last year's University of Melbourne's spring lectures, on higher education the Minister said,

> Even today I can still be shocked by the occasional piece of information that brings the message home: For example the observation, in a recent DITAC Report, that sixty per cent of the export earnings of Japan, France, Sweden and Italy are the direct result of developments of intellectual skills, compared with less than five per cent from Australia. Or, going back a little, the ASTEC statement, in a 1987 Report, that secondary industry

in Japan employed twenty nine per cent of all graduates compared with only nine per cent in Australia (Dawkins 1990, p.3).

Seeming Disjunctions between the 'New" Economics and Education

Some educational positions could sit quite happily with the 'new' economics: These include those which stress individual competitiveness, economic success, vocationalism and an educational concern with national priorities. Or as one comparative educationalist has put it, "Yield, output, efficiency, competition- these terms can be found in half a hundred official documents which governments use to launch reform today" (Neave 1989, p. 275). Other educational positions may be more disjunctive with the new trends: That is those which stress individual expression and fulfilment, rather than labour needs, which are more concerned with social responsibilities than economic-occupational competency, which stress diverse aesthetic and extra-mural experiences and see schooling as a non-utilitarian preparation for later study and life. Neave has commented that one of the most striking aspects of contemporary educational change internationally "is the disappearance of the ethic of of collective social responsibility" (1989, p. 274). There has therefore been a very notable paradigmatic shift from a community model of organisation to one of managerial efficiency.

To many educators the impact of the 'new' economics is strongly disorienting:-

* Much of contemporary political consciousness rests upon a conviction that education has "failed" society in the recent past (OECD 1989, p.20). Education's concerns with personal development, individual expression and social progress had, it is argued, caused it to depart from the needs of the 'world of work' and the harsh demands of economic life and to be apathetic, if not hostile, to these milieux. The "back to basics" movement was one of the symptoms of this dissatisfaction. So too were such neo-conservative studies such as Hirsch's Cultural Literacy, Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind and Ravitch and Finn's What Do Our 17 Year Olds Know ? In its more active form this criticism has led to alternative institutions and/or methods of education, outside the mainstream school system. This is expressed in the establishment of the City Technology Colleges in Britain for example, or more generally, calls for the privatisation of education (Walford, 1988). However, the new overarching concern is a move away from the culture of the redistributive state to the culture of the economic state based upon managerial efficiencies and competitiveness. This has had the educational effect of a new emphasis, which is not upon teacher and student or school driven education, but upon what are perceived to be the harsh demands of economic life.

* The urgencies about national economic priorities have seemingly led to an official position that their perceived educational implications can be quickly and simply translated into educational practice, be they in mathematics, science, business studies, Asian Studies or teacher education.

* There is less official support, particularly within the HEIs, for the humanities and social sciences, the so called life sciences, but much more for the sciences, engineering, business, information technology and other areas considered to be of particular value to industry and commerce. In addition there is increased pressure, in the post-Dawkins universities, towards applied research, and an intense competitiveness for funded research support. This has also been accompanied, in Australia, by the considerable strain of the abolition of the binary system, and its replacement by a unitary system of universities, as the sole providers of higher education. The Minister's view about the role of the nation's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) could hardly be less unambiguous: "As the primary source of the country's intellectual skills, their part is fundamental" (Dawkins 1990).

The 'New' Economics Expressed as Government Educational Initiatives

Although committed to the unregulated marketplace, one of the paradoxes of the 'new' economics is its acceptance of vigorous government leadership and indeed direction in education. In higher education, where official influence has so far been the strongest, its results can be seen in the Green (1987) and White (1988) Papers on Higher Education, as well as reports on post-graduate education, research in the HEIs, course length and nomenclature, teacher education, science and mathematics education, career education, and Asian

Studies. A concern to produce a "common curriculum framework" and "a common approach to assessment" for schools is also a feature of current official positions" (Dawkins 1988b, pp. 4,5).

The hurry to produce reports has sometimes led to poor articulation between them and this has had a fragmentary impact of education which should be essentially integrative. Reports upon post-graduate education and research in the HEIs (Smith, 1989) were the result of two committees working separately and Asian Studies has been the subject of three recent reports (FitzGerald, Ingleson and Garnaut) one of which focussed upon the school and teacher education aspects and another upon the HEIs. There have also been separate reports/policy statements upon career education, skills training, mathematics and science education and teacher education.

There are other dangers in such approaches to policy making: With so much activity occurring from the centre, the education establishment may become constantly reactive, or, worse still, passively compliant. This, in turn, can breed the illusion that policy implementation in education is comfortably analogous with changes in direction in business or on the factory floor. In fact lead times are long in education, its clients, personnel and programmes are diverse and complex, and its social/economic results are difficult of measurement. I am not suggesting that these realities should lead to perpetual hiatus but rather that expectations should neither be simplistic nor impatient. If expectations of the educational system are so naive, then we must continue to live with the corrosive effects of an underlying disillusionment with education, often expressed in a tendency to jump from one transient panacea to another, or to imagine that if all is activity then all is well.

It is not optimally productive to go about educational change or reform in a piecemeal way- be the concern with mathematics, science, literacy, career education, consumer education, atypicality, citizenship education, foreign languages and so on. Such approaches, although susceptible to task forces and the immediate and pragmatic world of politics, fail to recognise how interconnected a total curriculum is, and how change in one part inevitably impacts upon another.

The 'New' Economics as Educational Opportunity

More positively, the official pressures for change in education systems may also be viewed as the pressures of contemporaneity, that is the understandable desire by governments to have educational institutions absorb social and economic change and anxieties, to "catch up" as it were, particularly in the light of anxieties about the future. It can therefore be argued that the diverse, uncomfortable and often inchoate pressures upon education are the symptoms of a strong external desire to make education responsive to new circumstances, a need made sharper by our declining economic position.

The point should also be emphasized that there are quite distinctive features about the 'new' economics in Australian education which make the movement more attractive in some of its manifestations than those elsewhere. Under the Dawkins programme it has not been accompanied by the downgrading of public education and its increasing privatisation, teachers are receiving comparable salary justice and equity issues at all educational levels reflect much official concern. Positive concerns with many facets of education demonstrate a desire for renewal rather than official retreat. Indeed there are some aspects of the Dawkins' programme which might be seen by some as quite Keynesian. There is, as well, a sharp social edge to the present policies. Youth unemployment has increased sharply and has been strongly related to structural change in the economy. An OECD observation is therefore particularly relevant: "The problem is a shock to the past expectations that a person's opportunities were limited only by one's competence, ambitions and willingness to work" (1986, p. 6) The point should also be made that political literacy and economic literacy are now almost perfectly synonymous and personal dignity and economic self-dependence are usually closely interrelated.

The Extent of the Challenge

There can be no gainsaying the extent of the problem. The world is entering a new era, the so called post industrial age in which economic progress is not going to be based so much upon agriculture, or the exploitation of other natural resources, or growth in manufacturing but upon the accessing and processing of information. Hence a study which found that overall productivity growth in American and Japanese industry indicated that 15% came from the more efficient use of labour; 5% from capital investment but no

less than 60% from technological change, is now hardly surprising (Dennison 1988, p. 65). The post-industrial age will be dominated by such sciences and technologies as cybernetics, telematics, informatics and the growth in computer languages while the demands of international economic interdependence will grow in intensity.

One may reasonably wonder whether there has been a time more demanding of leadership and vision from Australia's educationalists. They will certainly have failed their responsibilities to the Australian community if they simply seek to unthinkingly accommodate current government initiatives. Much more than this is required of them.

Let me try to make my point by using a comparatively exotic example. Asian Studies is one of the new national priorities and the official position is that the school curriculum should be "Asianized" so that future generations of Australians are at least "Asia literate" (FitzGerald). Those of us who participated in the last Asian Studies movement over two decades ago, know how difficult it has often been to merge Asian Studies into the social sciences subjects- yet they should be the most susceptible. Now what is required is an across the curriculum sweep, and part of the rationale is the economic success of the nations of North-east Asia. As I have argued elsewhere it is an inadequate rationale but at least the official position, acknowledges some contemporary realities. One of the aims of this movement is to get Australians to recognise what part of the world they are actually situated in, and as a result the educational system will have the awesome task of realigning the cultural outlook of Australians. When before has such an expectation been made upon Australians? This illustrates how the demands upon the educational system are much greater than the official perspective, which might be seen as a rather confused commencement to the whole process.

The jobs of educationalists is not simply to oppose or obey government initiatives but to critically evaluate them, engage in formative debate and then seek to effectively implement that which seems appropriate in contemporary Australia.

From one perspective there are now many new opportunities for educationalists . For example, the Smith Report on Higher Education Research policy (1989) has made a crucial contribution to Australia's research future by highlighting the lack of growth in enrolments in research Degree programmes, the urgent need to improve the conditions of promising researchers both as students and specialist members of staff, and the great deficiencies in manpower planning for the new gene rations of academics. Even more importantly, it has underlined the need to vastly expand Australia's Research and Development efforts and the difficulties in R.&D. peculiar to Australia, as a result of its geographic isolation. It has also adopted the principle of equality of opportunity, based upon merit, in access to research funds by HEI staff. The Smith Report has also received strong practical support from the government. In other words, a substantial groundwork has been laid but it is now up to the HEIs to work out their own research priorities. These include a more critically evaluative approach to staff research activities, including the areas of particular research specialisation, and resolution of the traditional teaching-research dilemma, given the much more cosmopolitan nature of most of the Unified National System (UNS) Universities. It also involves their willingness to support research projects which, in a utilitarian age, are unlikely to receive external support but are fundamental to the mission of a university. The new research and development relationships which are being forged between the HEIs and the public and private sectors, offer great opportunities for mutual development and understanding, more effective curricula, particularly in the applied sciences and social sciences, greatly enhanced research output and increased autonomy through access to alternative funds. At the same time, there are obviously constraints upon entrepreneurial research activity, in HEI settings, related to level of intellectual challenge and their congruency with the educational and research missions appropriate to a particular university.

This same kind of enlightened balancing act with government proposals must also be performed by those in teacher education and the school system. The Ebbeck Report (1990) on teacher education, has been poorly received because it moves away from diversity in teacher preparation, has suggestions of the old pupil-teacher approaches, is uncritical in its acceptance of current emphases upon training, is logistically difficult to implement, particularly in non-metropolitan areas, and may expect too much of student teachers in their academic and professional preparation years. Nevertheless, some may wish to trial its major recommendations and, because it takes induction very seriously indeed, they should be encouraged to do so. But its most valuable contribution would be to become the basis for researched comparisons between

different approaches to preservice education, the actual induction needs of beginning teachers in different types of settings, along with the most propitious ways to integrate professional theory, practice and general studies in the interests of an intellectually strong and professionally effective teaching force.

Speedy has raised sensitivity about the needs of improved education in mathematics and science. But one does not have to be unduly critical to suggest that the central questions might have more to do with the way students learn, the distinctive character of the disciplines and the best methods for applying them successfully in very diverse client settings. Other issues revolve around the relationships of mathematics and science to other subjects of the curriculum, rather than being viewed as their own distinctive problems areas with the requirements set out in quantitative rather than qualitative terms.

Education in a New Age

But the overarching concern amidst current diverse anxieties of government, some poorly articulated, in its interface with the education industry, is the realisation that we are entering a new era, in which human priorities are likely to be profoundly different. The old confidences of national abundance based upon commodities, in particular, are inapplicable, a realisation now given contemporary expression in Australia by the adoption of the somewhat ingenuously expressed goal of the "clever country".

The debate amongst educationalists has hardly matched the challenge. A number of writers have made a valuable contribution by critically evaluating official perceptions of the output of the educational system and the new economic-labour expectations placed upon it. But responses have also been characterised by negativism, in which official positions are taken literally and narrowly and the total official effort characterised as a new instrumental direction in education. The latter is an obviously useful concept, yet it is hardly an all embracing one. It overlooks the often powerful mediating influences which educational institutions often have upon official pronouncements. Policy statements, particularly about curriculum, do not possess instant translation factors which ensure their educational realisation. If they did, governments would be less frustrated and educational systems poorer. The antagonists in the current debate are notably unsympathetic to concerns of government with economic decline. Further, the current debate, while responding to official economic obsessions with the education system fails to acknowledge official sensitiveness to the need for greater breadth in its position. An educationalist will quite rightly baulk at the inadequacies in a statement which describes the "core disciplines" of the school as "language, mathematics and science" and have reservations about notions of "a productive culture" (Dawkins and Holding 1987, p.9) in the context of current educational policies. But recognition should also be given to official acknowledgements that "education has the responsibility of preparing young people for active adult life and for helping them to develop the full range of their talents and interests. This goal extends well beyond the vocational objective, into areas such as citizenship, active participation in community life and the productive use of leisure"(Dawkins 1988a, pp. 10, 11).

There is a need for a strong future orientation notably absent, for example, during the revolution in the HEIs in the past two years where the tendency has been to become fixated upon the pre-1988 University rather than the UNS university of the future. The university system has to cope with mass higher education, a position said to have been reached when 15% of the cohort enter HEIs. Some countries, such as France, are now planning what is described as a a universal system of higher education by the new century (Bienayme 1987, p.83). Official policy here is also to increase HEI enrolments yet Australia, unlike other OECD countries, now has only one type of HEI institution to cope with them-the university. In these dramatically changing circumstances it is difficult to see how Australian tertiary education can continue to withstand the ideological aridity reflected by one of the chief antagonists in the debate, Pennington, who admitted that "Through the debates of the past two years, there has been remarkably little said about the purposes and values of Australian universities (Pennington, 1990, p.64). Lack of an educational ideology inevitably makes institutions defensive and vulnerable to outside pressures as Australian universities have so clearly been in recent times.

The post-modernist writer Jean-Francois Lyotard's description of the post-industrial university is that of an institution bereft of its traditional value systems and vacuously responding to external economic/social domination. Its concerns will be to produce those who have the skills necessary to enhance competitiveness in the world markets, as well as those whose contribution to social cohesiveness will be through the passive acceptance of their roles in the institutions in which they work. In a society driven by

knowledge applicability and technological productivity new relationships will be struck between "wealth, efficiency and truth" (Lyotard 1979, Eng. edit.1984, p.45) and "the technical criterion, introduced on a massive scale into scientific knowledge cannot help to influence the truth criterion" (Lyotard 1984, p.58). Lyotard's working hypothesis was "that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age." (Lyotard 1984, p.4). The university's task will then no longer be to produce an elite who can contribute to guiding society to its emancipation. In the new societies, bereft of uniting ideology, or as the post-modernists would express it, a meta-narrative, such cohesiveness as there is will come from a common subscription to personal and immediate satisfactions in a highly technologically driven society. Writers such as Howe (1959) and Levin (1966) unsurprisingly point to how the humanism and the Enlightenment characteristics of the culture of modernism may be threatened by the anti-intellectualism and obsessions of a technologically driven economy and society.

The counterpoint, however, must be that in post-modern society, the university's duty as social interpreter, its role as guardian of the culture and public educator, as well as its commitment to the discovery of truth could hardly be more important. Hence while being part of post-modern society, the university, in order to serve such a society well, will need also to continue to be driven by traditional university values which may seem antiquarian in terms of contemporary perspectives. We live, and apparently will continue to live, in the most testing times intellectually and educationally.

The landscape of the post-industrial society has been drawn by a number of perceptive analysts (Touraine 1974; Calinescu 1977; Kumar 1978; Raulet 1983; Frankel 1987). Its prosperity lies with information technology - with what has been termed "quaternary industry, specialising in the transfer of information and knowledge," which will branch off from the now lower order conventional tertiary industry (Sugimoto 1990, p. 50) with its concern for the transfer of goods and the provision of services. Some writers characterize post-modern societies as communities in which the old dichotomies, right and left, capital and labour, traditionalist and progressive, religionists and secularists will be blurred to be replaced by a great variety of groups with transient orientations and memberships. Not surprisingly post-modern societies are seen as more socially tolerant societies, characterized by heterogeneous lifestyles, whose members rebel against consumer conformity and form highly segmented markets. Kumar (1978) has summarized the main principles of the future society as "knowledge, personal services, the electronic technology of computers and telecommunications."

Challenges for Education

Such intellectualising of a society in a state of profound change, as well as the urgent realities of the present, confront education with great challenges. It is clear (as a recent OECD Report puts it) that "the development, application, dissemination and mastery of advanced technologies are the necessary ingredients of economic success in technologically advanced societies" (OECD 1989, p.18). It follows that it is the task of education to provide access by all groups in society to sophisticated and adaptable knowledge and skills training for the world of work. This is important not only for economic progress but also to maintain the social consensus which is crucially important in post-industrial societies.

An obvious implication is that schooling must be more effective than ever before, and that initial education as a terminal experience will be more and more difficult to sustain. Indeed the whole notion of basic education may in some respects become redundant since education's concerns in post-industrial society will be with adaptability, and a commitment to learning anew. Modern technologies will require continuing education and much of it may well occur away from educational institutions. The implications of the importance of links between educators and industry, particularly in the training area, are obvious. So too will be the quality of the education for work experience. Watts, for example, has commented upon the danger" that post-secondary institutions will be pressed to become mere training grounds, directed at narrow vocationalism and responding primarily to immediate demands....He therefore raises the question, "in a society characterized by change, could the most useful vocational education be one that lays the foundations for a lifetime of learning, including significant changes in employment or careers over the course of a working life?" (1987, p.9).

At a time of rapid change it is not acceptable to add more and more to the school curriculum. The task is to revise and integrate new educational imperatives and this will involve the pruning of irrelevant material and

approaches. Some national systems have endeavoured to respond qualitatively to the increased demands on school students by actually decreasing the elements of the curriculum, particularly at the junior secondary level. Again, as the information technologies are integrated increasingly into the curriculum there should be less need for computer education and informatics to exist as comparatively distinctive experiences.

While the world of economic production will impose greater demands upon the school, it would be unacceptable for it to be seen simply as an interface for the complex world of work. In fact, given the less cohesive nature of post-industrial society, effective citizenship and human relationships education, along with education in the arts, and other more broadening personal pursuits will become increasingly important. This is highlighted by descriptions which have been made of the landscape of post-industrial society. It is non-ideological, highly differentiated in attitudes and satisfactions, less integrative but more relaxed, socially non-conformist and quality of life oriented. It is unlikely that educational institutions will be able to rely on the old coercions and they will also be required to offer greater choice and flexibility . Indeed the leading post-modernist thinker, Lyotard, has defined postmodern as "incredulity towards meta-narratives," a distrust of "stories" which purport to justify certain practices by grounding them on a set of transcendental, ahistorical, or universal principles. This, Lyotard suggests, is the product of progress in the sciences, specifically in the way we practise science.

At the same time the question, should be raised whether we should introduce greater vocational components for secondary students, expand parallel vocational provisions to mainstream schooling, seek to more directly intervene to socially and vocationally assist unmotivated young school leavers and increase training and vocational places in post-compulsory education? Such policies are not unknown in Australian education, but they are not as extensive as they are in Western Europe since local vocational places in post-compulsory education, for example, are less than half of the OECD average (Sweet 1989).

For their part, Australian universities as the sole suppliers of higher education for society must direct special attention to the quality of their preparation at the undergraduate level for the professions, be adaptable to fast changing economic and technological needs, and ensure that educational provisions are adaptable and flexible. Work experiences as educational experiences for which credit is given, as well as a module approach to awards, offer productive possibilities. The quality of post-initial education, and its degree of vocational and personal relevance to diverse client groups, on a continuing basis, will be of fundamental importance. The university also has the daunting task of preparing the researchers for the future and seeking to discharge its traditional role as public educator to a now highly pluralist and media driven society.

Conclusion

It would be difficult to deny that a literature of negativitism has appeared in Australian education in the last two or three years. Much of it has been produced from the Universities, and is usually a defensive response to the new policy directions in education. Some of this defensiveness arises from institutional protectionism, it often seems motivated by adopting historical positions, particularly those of the 1970's to the challenges of the present although its more idealistic positions have been concerned, for example, with the essential importance of basic research to the university and its humane and social missions. It must also be said that few of the official educational positions provide perfect blueprints for the future, since they are the product of the ubiquitous transient committee or Government Board and therefore have their own inbuilt constraints in terms of breadth and length of educational vision. However, they also represent important initiatives in areas as diverse as curriculum, educational priorities, systems change, research in HEI settings and professional preparation in a number of fields. The responsibility of the educational systems is to respond critically but constructively to these wide ranging signals so that the often poorly articulated educational concerns of government, and the realities of a society undergoing profound change, receive constructive expression in educational practice. The educational institutions also have their own proactive responsibilities. These include their distinctive responses to the demands of the new vocationalism in education; the challenges to the system of the increasing number of school students who seem unlikely to find a secure place in the adult world; the educational responses to a much more pluralist educational clientele, now extending into the HEIs; seeking to achieve educational balance between current concerns with individual economic effectiveness and success, and civic duty; integration of the new technologies into educational practice, including their social evaluation, and maintenance of the humane concerns of education as well as its economic promise. Hence the basic duty of educationalists is to

constructively and persuasively transcend the social obsessions of the moment so that the verities of individual enhancement and expression; social responsibility; preserving the culture and being concerned with the quest for truth are preserved, while at the time contributing to society's economic well being and its adjustment to a constantly changing contemporary world.

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